

HEALTHY TEETH

Some parents think that it is not important for toddlers to have healthy teeth because, after all, they are only “baby teeth.” But baby teeth are important! Read below to find out why you need to keep these first teeth healthy.



- Front teeth are needed for biting into many kinds of foods, like apples and pears. Without them eating is hard!
- Teeth help your child learn to chew. This helps develop strong jaw muscles.



- Permanent teeth form in the gums under baby teeth. Healthy baby teeth that stay in place assist in the proper spacing of permanent teeth.
- Cavities and tooth decay are painful! Unhealthy teeth can affect your child’s food intake and result in poor nutrition and other health problems.

Parents of Toddlers (One to Two Years)

As a parent, there are ways to help your toddler have healthy teeth. Follow these simple rules.



Set a good example! Your child learns by watching you. Let your toddler watch while you brush your teeth.

Clean your child's teeth every day with a small, soft toothbrush and water. (No toothpaste until age 2!)

Plan the first **dental visit** at about age 1. Go every six months after that.



Wean your child from the bottle by his or her first birthday. Any liquid except water contains sugar, which can cause tooth decay. It is especially important **not** to put your toddler to bed with a bottle that contains anything but water! Sugar in milk, for example, will cause tooth decay while your child sleeps.



Limit sugary snacks to mealtimes. Tooth decay is not caused by the amount of sugar the child eats in a day but by how often the sugary food is eaten.



Provide water with fluoride for your child. Fluoride is a mineral that helps the surface of the tooth become hard. A hard outer covering helps prevent cavities from forming. Many public water supplies in Mississippi have fluoride already added. Ask your WIC nutritionist or nurse if your water has fluoride. Read the label on bottled water, because many brands do not have fluoride.

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